



## KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

### NEWS RELEASE

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## **CANDIDATES NAMED IN COMMISSIONER SEARCH**

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) – Today, the Kentucky Board of Education announced the names of the five candidates it is currently considering for the position of commissioner of education.

The five are:

- **Kathleen M. Airhart, Ed.D.** – Airhart currently serves as the deputy commissioner, chief operating officer for the Tennessee Department of Education, a position she has held since January. She has primary responsibility for the divisions of state finance, federal programs, audit, information technology, and human resources. Prior to that she was deputy commissioner, chief academic officer with the Tennessee Department of Education and provided direct oversight to the divisions of curriculum and instruction, career and technical education, special populations, audit and consolidated planning and monitoring. Airhart's previous experience includes: teacher; compliance consultant; special education supervisor; and superintendent for the Putnam County school system in Cookeville, Tennessee. She earned a bachelor's degree, master's degree and educational specialist degree from Tennessee Technological University and a Doctorate of Education from Tennessee State University.
- **Buddy Berry, Ed.D.** – Berry is in his sixth year as superintendent of Eminence Independent Schools in Eminence, Kentucky. Berry's previous experience, all in Kentucky, includes: mathematics teacher and head football coach at Owen County High School and Jeffersontown High School; guidance counselor at Shelby County High School; mathematics teacher at Eminence Ind. High School; and Highly Skilled Educator with the Kentucky Department of Education. Berry earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Kentucky; a master's from Bellarmine University; a superintendency certificate from Eastern Kentucky University; and a Doctorate of Education from Northern Kentucky University.
- **Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.** – Koch (*pronounced cook*) currently is the interim president of the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), a position he has held since May. Prior to that he was Illinois State Superintendent of Education from December 2006-May 2015. Koch's previous experience

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includes assistant superintendent, chief education officer, and director of special education with the Illinois state education agency; education program specialist with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education; and special education/vocational teacher in four states and in various settings including an Outward Bound program, college preparatory school, youth detention center and psychiatric hospital. Koch earned a bachelor's degree from Southern Illinois University and a master's degree and Doctorate of Education from The George Washington University.

- **Lloyd D. Martin, Ph.D.** – Martin is currently the chief executive officer for Universal School Solutions, LLC, an education consultancy firm that he founded in 2010 in Jacksonville, Florida. Martin's prior experience includes: superintendent of Mansfield City Schools in Mansfield, Ohio; executive director of K-9 education – cluster 1, and regional director with the Duval County Public Schools, in Jacksonville, Florida; executive principal with the Dayton Public Schools in Dayton, Ohio; and principal, assistant principal, leadership trainee, and social studies teacher with the Columbus Public Schools in Columbus, Ohio. Martin earned a bachelor's degree from Ohio State University; a master's degree from the University of Dayton, where he also earned a Doctorate of Philosophy.
- **Stephen L. Pruitt, Ph.D.** – Pruitt is currently senior vice president at Achieve, Inc., an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit education reform organization, where he has served since 2010. Pruitt's prior experience includes chief of staff, associate state superintendent, director of academic standards, and science and mathematics program manager with the Georgia Department of Education; and high school chemistry teacher in Fayetteville and Tyrone, Georgia. Pruitt earned a bachelor's degree from North Georgia College and State University; a master's from the University of West Georgia and a Doctorate of Philosophy from Auburn University.

"The pool of candidates for this position was excellent because of the extensive outreach and Kentucky's strong history as a progressive leader in public education," said Kentucky Board of Education Chair Roger Marcum. "Narrowing the pool has been difficult, because of the wide-ranging and vast experience the many candidates would bring to the job. We continue to focus on the characteristics for the commissioner's position that the board agreed upon and on which Kentucky educators, partner groups and the public provided input early in the search. The board looks forward to continuing exploration of each candidate's thoughts, ideas and views this weekend."

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The board will meet tomorrow and Saturday in Lexington to conduct second interviews with each of the five candidates.

During the search, the board and search firm, Greenwood/Asher and Associates, Inc. made more than 330 contacts, reviewed detailed information on more than 44 individuals and interviewed 13 candidates.

The new commissioner will replace current Commissioner Terry Holliday, who is retiring next week.

The board has selected Associate Commissioner and General Counsel Kevin C. Brown to serve as interim commissioner starting Sept. 1 until a new commissioner can begin.

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